



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Republicans | Ranking Member Phil Roe, M.D.

H.R. 3535: The GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act of 2019

Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work-study program provides eligible students using the GI Bill with job opportunities at their school, at a VA facility, or in jobs that help veterans in higher education. Under the program, students submit their hours via a timecard, which is then emailed to the VA Regional Processing Office in Muskogee, Oklahoma. The student is then paid directly by VA for the number of hours they worked. The rate of pay under the work-study program is equal to the federal minimum wage or the state income wage, whichever is higher. While the VA work-study program is a great benefit for veterans, concerns have been raised by students, school administrators, and veterans service organizations about the timeliness of VA's work-study payments and the lack of prioritization that work-study claims receive relative to other GI Bill claims being adjudicated by VA. Some students have reported waiting weeks without being paid by VA and the Student Veterans of America testified in March 2019 that their chapter leaders found the VA work-study payment process to be, "antiquated, cumbersome, and lethargic" and an "unreliable source of income" for the students who use it.

The GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act of 2019 would authorize schools, rather than VA, to make payments to students for the work they are performing under the VA work-study program. VA would provide the schools with batch funds to use specifically for this purpose. This would make the VA work-study program more reliable for students, remove VA from having to process work-study claims altogether, and more closely align VA's work-study program with proven practices of the Department of Education's Federal Work-Study program.

The Message:

- The GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act would streamline the payment process for students using the VA work-study program, making it a timelier and more reliable source of income for those who rely on it.
- The GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act is a no-cost solution that will resolve persistent issues with an important program that allows students to earn extra money helping veterans.
- The GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act would alleviate the need for VA to process work-study claims, meaning that claims processors will have more time to attend to other pressing needs within VA - like GI Bill claims for veterans.